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LT GENERAL MANOJ PANDE APPOINTED NEW ARMY CHIEF

Lieutenant General Pande will succeed General Manoj Mukund Naravane, whose tenure will end on April 30

FIRST ENGINEER TO HOLD THE TOP MILITARY POST

Currently serving as the Vice Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Pande is the first engineer to be appointed to the top post. He commanded an engineer regiment along the LoC during the Operation Parakram in Jammu and Kashmir, an engineer brigade in the western sector, an infantry brigade along the LoC and a mountain division in western Ladakh

BRASS TAKES STOCK OF BORDER SITUATION

- The operational situation along India's borders was discussed in the Army Commanders' Conference in New Delhi on Monday
- The conference, an institutional platform for conceptual-level deliberations leading to policy decisions, will conclude on April 22. It will discuss border infra, new tech and Ukraine conflict P7

May 1

LT GEN MANOJ PANDE WILL TAKE OVER AS THE 29TH ARMY CHIEF NEXT MONTH

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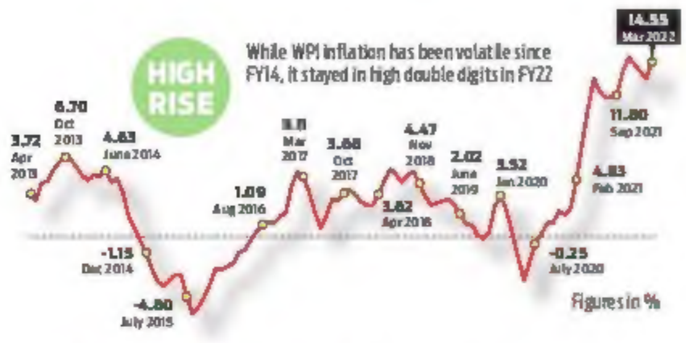

Wholesale price inflation @ 30-yr high in 2021-22

Hits four-month high of 14.55% in March; stood at 12.96% for the whole of last year

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

THE Centre's inflation headache seems to be getting severe as the wholesale price index (WPI)-based price rise surged to a 30-year high of 12.96% in FY22, on rising commodity prices and a low base of 1.3% in FY21. The last time wholesale inflation touched such high levels was three decades ago – at 13.7% in FY92 (on base year of 1981-82).

According to the latest data released by the Union commerce ministry on Monday, WPI-based inflation stood at 14.5% in March — a four-month high — compared with 7.89% in the year-ago period. WPI inflation was 13.11% in February this year.

The month of March also saw consumer price index-based inflation rise to a 17-month high of 6.95%.

While the Reserve Bank of India considers retail inflation for its policy decisions, the wholesale price rise does get reflected on the retail inflation print as companies pass on the burden to consumers.

"The high rate of inflation in March is primarily due to rise in prices of crude petroleum & natural gas, mineral oils, basic metals owing to disruption in the global supply chain caused by Russia-Ukraine conflict," a government release read.

The month-over-month change in WPI for the fuel and power basket in March stood at 2.69% compared to February, while that for manufactured products surged 2.31% over the same period. Fuel & power and manufactured products formed 13.15% and 64.23%, respectively, of WPI.

The rate of inflation based on WPI food index rose from 8.47% in February to 8.71% in March. The food index consists of 'food articles' from the primary group and 'food product' from the manufactured products group.

"The surge is fairly broad based as primary articles, fuel & power and manufacturing recorded double-digit inflation in March 2022," said Sunil Kumar Sinha, principal economist, India Ratings.

Fuel & power inflation, which was on a declining trajectory, reversed its course in March by increasing to 34.5% against 31.5% a month-ago.

RBI flags risks to economy

India has managed the pandemic well and economic activity is picking up momentum, but these gains are "at risk from disruptive spillovers from geo-political hostilities..." RBI said in a note

State govt collects 30% commission from mutts: Seer

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bagalkot/Bengaluru

WITHIN a week of civil contractor Santosh Patil committing suicide after accusing then Rural Development and Panchayat Raj minister KS Eshwarappa's associates of demanding a commission to release funds, a Veerashaiva Lingayat seer from Northw Karnataka accused the state government of demanding a 30 per cent commission to release grants to mutts.

The allegation by the seer, Balehosur Mutt pontiff **Dingaleshwara Swami**, gave fresh ammo to opposition parties to corner the government on corruption charges, while Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said a thorough probe will be conducted if the seer provides details.

"The government demands a 30 per cent commission to release the grants sanctioned to mutts or temples. Officers not only openly communicate with mutts about the commission, but also make it clear that the work will be carried out only if the commission is given," the seer told TNIE on Monday.

"It is disappointing that corruption has reached new heights in the state. The MLAs have reached such levels that they decide the commission even before the project is officially announced. It is not just my statement, but that of people too. I will stand by my words," he said. He first made the allegation while addressing farmers on Sunday during the valedictory ceremony of Sankalp Yatra, organised by Congress veteran SR Patil, at Badagandi village near Bagalkot. Responding to the charges, Bommai said a thorough probe will be conducted if the Swamiji provides details. "Dingaleshwara Swamiji is a revered seer and it is not enough if he just gives a statement. If he can provide details as to who demanded the commission, to whom it was paid, and all the related details, then I will ensure a thorough probe," Bommai said. P4

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EXPRESS READ

CM heading to Delhi, hints at Cabinet rejig

A day after the BJP state executive committee meeting at Hosapete in Vijayanagara district, CM Basavaraj Bommai on Monday hinted at changes in his Cabinet. Speaking to the media, Bommai said a special meeting will be convened by top BJP leaders in Delhi | P4

BBMP truck runs over woman bank staffer

Bengaluru: A 40-year-old woman employee of a nationalised bank died on the spot after a speeding BBMP garbage truck crashed into her scooter at Nayandahalli junction on Mysuru Road on Monday night. The deceased, Padmini D, a resident of RR Nagar, was working as a deputy manager of the bank at St Mark's Road branch. Traffic was affected for a while on the busy road after the accident that occurred around 8 pm. P2

Yuzvendra Chahal's five-wicket haul, including a fourth-over hat-trick, helped Rajasthan Royals pull off a seven-run victory against Kolkata Knight Riders in an IPL match on Monday. Jos Buttler's second hundred of season helped RR score 217 for five in 20 overs | P11

CID raids BJP leader's house, arrests her husband in PSI scam

RAMKRISHNA BADSESHI @Kalaburagi

THE probe into the alleged scam surrounding the police sub-inspectors' (PSI) recruitment common entrance test, conducted by the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC), netted the husband of a BJP leader late Sunday night in Kalaburagi.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) sleuths raided the residence of BJP leader and ex-president of Kalaburagi District BJP Mahila Morcha, Divya, and arrested her husband Rajesh Hagaragi, besides conducting searches at an educational institution they are linked to on Monday and seizing CCTV footage from its premises.

The raid was conducted based on evidence pointing to the alleged involvement of the Hagaragi couple and several others at the institution in the recruitment scam. Rajesh and Divya are president and secretary, respectively, of the Jnana Ganga Education Institute, which was one of the centres for PSI entrance test on October 3, 2021. Large-scale malpractices were reported at the centre, including exam supervisors helping candidates write the papers.

The CID sleuths, led by Kalaburagi SP Raghavendra Hegde, DySPs Shankargowda Patil and Prakash Rathod, raided Divya's house, but she was not there at that time. Towards the end of the raid, Rajesh was arrested. Sources said Divya may also be questioned once she is traced. She has remained incommunicado since April 9, when the CID registered a recruitment scam case at the Chowk police station.

CID sleuths earlier arrested three supervisors working at the institution – Suma, Siddamma and Savitri. They were taken to the institution on Monday during the raid to gather further evidence. Sources said that as per information collected by the CID, institution principal Kashinath had switched off the CCTV cameras for about half-an-hour on the day the malpractice was committed. The sleuths are yet to examine the CCTV footage. Divya was the district unit president of BJP Women Morcha till September-end, 2021. P5

Re-exam to be considered only after probe: CM

CM Basavaraj Bommai said the state government has ordered a CID probe and has given it a free hand. "We will take action against those involved, whoever it is," he said. Asked about a demand from candidates for a re-exam, he said, "It will be decided after getting a comprehensive probe report."

Kheri: SC nixes bail of minister's son

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Monday set aside the bail granted to Ashish Mishra, son of Union minister Ajay Mishra, in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence, observing the Allahabad High Court was myopic and in a tearing hurry to give him relief.

The order came on a petition filed by the family members of the victims of the violence. It directed Ashish to surrender within a week.

A bench led by Chief Justice of India N V Ramana directed the high court to decide the matter afresh, observing among other factors that the victims didn't get effective hearing.

The bench observed that instead of looking into aspects such as the nature and gravity of the offence, severity of the punishment in the event of conviction, circumstances which are peculiar to the accused or victims, likelihood of the accused fleeing, likelihood of tampering with the evidence and witnesses and the impact that his release may have on the trial and the society at large, the high court adopted a myopic view of the evidence on the record.

"The high court shall decide the bail application afresh expeditiously and preferably within a period of three months," the order read. The bench said the high court took into account several irrelevant considerations while ignoring judicial precedents and parameters.

"It has been ruled on numerous occasions that a FIR cannot be treated as an encyclopedia of events.

NCP in K'taka to unite secular parties: Pawar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

SHARAD Pawar, the founder of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), on Monday said that his visit to Karnataka is part of his mission to create a consensus among secular political parties in the country and he will make use of his personal relationship with former prime minister HD Deve Gowda to unite in the larger interest of the country. Pawar said he is visiting different states with the same mission.

The 81-year-old leader, speaking after inaugurating the NCP Karnataka office, said, "We have no base in Karnataka and will contest a limited number of seats in the Assembly polls by ensuring that secular votes do not get divided. We follow the same strategy in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana."

Asked who will lead the non-BJP alliance, he said it will be decided after bringing everyone together. "In a month or so we may sit together, discuss and take a stand as the country needs an alternative," he added.

He refused to predict the outcome of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Asked about election strategist Prashant Kishor giving a presentation to Congress interim chief Sonia Gandhi, Pawar said he does not believe in such predictions. The Congress-led UPA came to power in 2004 despite predictions not favouring it, he pointed out. P4

NCP chief Sharad Pawar (right) during the inauguration of the party office in Bengaluru on Monday | ASHISHKRISHNA HP

HUBBALLI CLASHES: 15 MORE HELD

The Hubballi police on Monday arrested 15 more people in connection with the stone-throwing at Old Hubballi police station late Saturday night | P4

5 Bengal labourers die in M'luru factory

VINCENT D'SOUZA @ Mangaluru

FIVE labourers from West Bengal suffocated to death at a fish processing unit in the Special Economic Zone (MSEZ) on the outskirts of Mangaluru city on Sunday.

The deceased have been identified as Mohammed Samirulla, Umar Farooq, Nizamuddin Ali, Mirajul Islam and Sarafath Ali. While four of them were in their 20s, one was said to be 16-year-old, which is being verified. Three other labourers, Hasan Ali, Karibulla and Aftal Malik, who took ill are being treated at a private hospital and are out of danger.

The waste water tank where the labourers got stuck in the slush

The incident occurred around 6 pm on Sunday when Nizamuddin went in to clean a 20-foot-deep waste water tank at Sri Ulka LLB, a factory that exports processed fish to Russia, China and other countries. He reportedly got stuck in the slush in the tank and cried out for help. Other labourers who were around rushed to his help. They not only failed to rescue him, but two others, Samirulla and Farooq, also got stuck in the slush and died. Five other labourers who entered the tank were rushed to a private hospital, where Mirajul and Sarafath, died on Monday morning.

CONTINUED ON P5

Jahangirpuri gunman, VHP leader arrested

ANKITA UPADHYAY AND VATSALA SHRANGI @New Delhi

THE Delhi Police on Monday lodged an FIR against the organisers of the Shobha Yatra that was marred by riots in Jahangirpuri, two days after violence broke out in the area. VHP and Bajrang Dal members took out the procession without permission, the FIR alleged.

DCP (northwest) Usha Rangnani said an FIR has been registered against the organisers of the evening procession. "One of the accused identified as Prem Sharma, VHP zila sewa pramukh, has been arrested for the procession on the evening of April 16 without having permission," she said. It later emerged he was let off by the police after questioning. Vinod Bansal, VHP's national spokesperson, wondered, "If the organisers didn't have permission, then what were police officials doing moving along it?"

Amid uneasy calm in Jahangirpuri on Monday, a minor incident of stone pelting ratcheted up tension again. "A video was being circulated on social media showing a man in blue *kurta* opening fire during the riots in Jahangirpuri area on April 16. He has been nabbed by the special staff of our district," the DCP added.

Four forensic teams visited the spot on Monday to collect evidence, Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana said. He also dismissed allegations claiming attempts to hoist a saffron flag atop a mosque during the procession on Saturday. Meanwhile, a letter petition was filed before Chief Justice of India N V Ramana urging him to take suo motu cognisance of the Jahangirpuri riot and constitute a probe panel headed by a sitting Supreme Court judge.

Siachen Glacier melting slower than others in Himalayas

DONNA EVA @Bengaluru

THE Siachen Glacier is escaping the high rate of melting that other Himalayan glaciers are experiencing due to the impact of climate change. This means that the glacier, which is considered strategic to both India and Pakistan, is likely to remain the highest battleground in the world for many more decades to come than imagined.

A team of researchers from the University of Leeds, which studied 14,798 Himalayan glaciers during and since the Little Ice Age (which occurred between the 14th and 19th century) by computer reconstruction of the sizes and ice surfaces of these glaciers, has found these glaciers to be melting at a rate ten times faster, losing around 40 per cent of their area — shrinking from a peak of 28,000 sqkm to around 19,600 sqkm today.

However, renowned glaciologist and professor at the Divecha Centre for Climate Change (DCCC) at the Indian Institute of Science, Dr Anil V Kulkarni told The New Indian Express that despite Himalayan glaciers losing ice ten times quicker than on an average in the last 400 to 700 years, as found by the University of Leeds researchers, Siachen Glacier will remain relatively stable longer.

He explained that the Siachen Glacier, situated north of Ladakh and wedged between the Trans Karakoram Tract in the north, Gilgit-Baltistan in the west and Aksai Chin in the east, is in the Karakoram mountain range and is subject to the "Karakoram anomaly". This deviation in glacial melt trend found in Siachen Glacier is part of an anomalous growth of glaciers in the central Karakoram, which is in contrast to the retreat of glaciers in nearby Himalayan ranges. This means glaciers within the range — including Siachen — are relatively stable, despite glaciers in nearby regions retreating and shrinking faster due to global warming.